

affected by this, as well as issues in countries that are currently experiencing an outbreak.

Integration from the Federal, State and local levels is going to be critical. The global health threat is important. It should not, indeed, it cannot be ignored. But preparing for the threat within our own country is certainly critical.

The virus, H5N1, could appear in the bird population as early as this fall in the Western Hemisphere; and even if it does appear in birds it doesn't mean that a pandemic has started. But because of the natural flyways that exist, that is a possibility that we need to be, we, in Congress, need to be prepared for how we educate our constituents and how we help our State and local officials adjust to that.

Preparedness is going to be the greatest single tool at our disposal to mitigate what might otherwise be a disaster of worldwide proportions.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue. I thank you for the time and letting me come to the House and talk about this tonight. I know I have covered a lot of these issues relatively quickly. I know a lot of the maps are somewhat involved, and they have gone by quickly. They are available on my Web site at [burgess.house.gov](http://burgess.house.gov).

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 367. Concurrent resolution honoring and praising the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution on the 100th anniversary of being granted its Congressional Charter.

#### OUR IRAQ POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This evening I come to the floor to continue the discussion that this Congress has had with respect to our policies as it relates to Iraq.

I was fortunate this past weekend to attend yet another ceremony, in this case, with the 1048th Tankers Division from the State of Connecticut who was being deployed to Iraq.

We in this country continue to owe a great debt of gratitude to the men and women who wear the uniform and who have served this country so valiantly and with such courage. But we also owe a deep debt of gratitude to their families in what has become gut-wrenching ceremonies as you watch young children and mothers and grandparents say goodbye to their loved ones who are going over to Iraq, including a mother who has three sons that are now over there, and another mother who saw her

son off and her husband had just left the week before.

So it is very disconcerting when you find that the only people that we have asked to make a sacrifice in the war on terror have become the men and women who serve in the front lines and their families who are left behind.

Our hearts go out to all of them. And what they deserve, more than anything else, is a Nation that will level with them, that will provide them with a plan, that will tell these troops, especially in the case of the National Guard and the reservists who have been deployed, redeployed, deployed again, their stays more so than at any other point in the history of this country, and they do so with a salute and they follow orders. How grateful a Nation we should be.

And yet here at home we hear, just in the previous hour, discussions that center on a tax cut and how important a tax cut is. I have never met anyone that didn't favor tax cuts. But it is disconcerting when you look out at these families and you see that this Congress focuses on tax cuts for the Nation's wealthiest 1 percent, making sure that we ladle on more tax cuts to those already impoverished oil companies who are experiencing unprecedented profits.

Yet I look out into that audience in Connecticut, in the State armory and see these families, many who will struggle during this time, many whose gas prices will rise during the time of this 18-month deployment.

So you say to yourself, well, where is the plan? What is the exit strategy? What do we owe these individuals? Do we not at least owe them the truth?

So there was a debate enjoined on this floor 2 weeks ago, a nonbinding resolution, in essence, a conversation, a conversation where 99 percent of the people on the other side of the aisle said, stay the course, while the Nation and while this side of the aisle clamors for a new direction for America.

When I looked out into the eyes of the audience of those families and I saw their concern and need, they want a new direction for the country, especially as it relates to Iraq.

Isn't it amazing that they can get a plan from the Iraqi government, that they can get several plans from Democrats, whether it be JACK MURTHA's bold plan that, well, seemingly the Iraqi government agrees with, or whether it be CARL LEVIN's plan, well, that seemingly now General Casey agrees with?

So we find the Pentagon and the Iraqi government, JACK MURTHA, CARL LEVIN, and several other Democrats offering thoughtful plans, and the Republicans saying stay the course and a President still unable to level with the American people and unwilling still to meet with parents who have lost their kids, who line the highway on the way to Crawford, Texas, or wait patiently outside The White House for an audience.

It amazes me that, while the Iraqis can say that they have a position and they know that they have to take on

responsibility, that we will somehow let the Iraqis determine the faith of our brave men and women, so much so that there has even been talk of amnesty, amnesty for those who have killed, maimed or kidnapped American soldiers or citizens. There can be no amnesty for that. There is no honor in the great sacrifice that our men and women have provided. No matter what the Iraqi government might say, we, as the United States Congress, have an obligation to our men and women and the citizens that are in Iraq working on behalf of this country to make sure that that cannot stand.

And what do we get from our erstwhile colleagues on the other side of the aisle and why was this debate conducted in the manner that it was?

Well, let me tell you why. Because Karl Rove hatched a plan in New Hampshire. You see, he went there and laid out this strategy; and the strategy was a very simple one. It is one that they used before. They just dusted off the playbook and said, you know, it works when we attack Democrats. We attack them for their patriotism.

It worked successfully against Max Cleland. We were able to take that man, who gave three of his limbs for this country, to make him appear to be unpatriotic and go after him personally.

It worked against JOHN KERRY. We were able to swift boat him during the Presidential campaign, to tarnish his service and the medals he earned.

And it is working against JACK MURTHA, they think. So that we can turn around and tarnish him as well.

And Karl Rove launches his strategy, and then JOHN BOEHNER rolls out the talking points for the caucus, and then the debate is neatly sandwiched in between the time allotted, with no Democratic alternative being allotted, and the White House picnic, just in time for the President to take a surprise trip to Iraq for a photo-op and to return home.

The Nation deserves better than that. If the Iraqi security advisors can provide us with a plan, why can't Donald Rumsfeld provide us with a plan?

No wonder, in the Washington Post today and the New York Times over the weekend, people are wild over the fact that, if all that debate and discussion was truly about a course for this Nation, how is it that General Casey's plan sounds identical to CARL LEVIN's plan? And how is it that the Iraqis can acknowledge what Mr. MURTHA acknowledged last November?

On this side of the aisle, we have come to know what it is all about. It is about the continued hypocrisy as it relates to leveling with the American people and, more importantly, leveling with our troops, with the National Guard and reservists and their families and the kind of sacrifice that we have asked them to do, and we have prevailed upon them, and they have done